

**IN THE NEWS**
**Olmert: Hezbollah neutralized**

Ehud Olmert said the Lebanon war had neutralized the threat from Hezbollah.

The Israeli prime minister toured a military position on Israel's border with Lebanon on Tuesday and heard from members of top military brass about Israel's tactical achievements in the 34-day war.

"Except for the Iranian problem, no one now threatens Israel," Olmert said.

The comments clashed with the assessment of Olmert's critics, who say the war was inconclusive and bolstered Israel's enemies, including Palestinian terrorist groups in the Gaza Strip.

**Israeli forces kill 3 in Gaza**

Israeli soldiers killed three Palestinian gunmen in the southern Gaza Strip.

Troops and tanks rolled toward Khan Yunis on Tuesday, killing two armed Hamas members and an Al-Aksa Brigades gunman in clashes.

Several other gunmen were wounded. Military sources said soldiers fired at Palestinians trying to plant a bomb.

Israel has stepped up Gaza military operations after Palestinian gunmen abducted a soldier in a deadly cross-border raid in June.

**Cabinet comeback for Barak?**

Ehud Barak is expected to join Israel's government. Israeli media reported Tuesday that the former prime minister likely would replace Sports and Culture Minister Ophir Pines-Paz, who tendered his resignation to protest the inclusion of the far-right Yisrael Beiteinu Party in the governing coalition.

Barak and Pines-Paz both are from the center-left Labor Party, though Barak has largely been absent from politics in recent months.

# WORLD REPORT

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## Synagogues, Jewish groups seek line between legal, illegal political talk

By JENNIFER JACOBSON

**W**ASHINGTON (JTA) — Every election year Rabbi David Saperstein gets asked the same questions:

Can a synagogue host candidate forums and debates?

Yes, says the director of the Reform movement's Religious Action Center.

Can a Jewish nonprofit distribute voter registration and absentee ballot forms?

Yes.

Can either institution endorse or oppose a political candidate or party?

No.

The center sends these guidelines each election year to federations, synagogues and other nonprofits.

But the phone calls and e-mails kept coming, so Saperstein organized a conference call in mid-October with rabbis and lay leaders on what's kosher and what's not when it comes to synagogue and state.

About 200 people from synagogues around the country participated.

The volume, Saperstein said, "speaks to the confusion that's out there and the intent and commitment to getting it right."

Since the 2004 election, the Internal Revenue Service has increased its enforcement of restrictions for nonprofits, including religious organizations. The 501c3 tax-exempt status such organizations enjoy bans fundraising or organizing for political candidates or parties.

High-profile IRS investigations of several churches since the 2004 election have

unnerved Jewish leaders.

"We don't want any of our rabbis and synagogues to get into trouble," Saperstein said.

Ellen Aprill, a law professor at Loyola University in Los Angeles who addressed the callers, outlined the golden rule for 501c3s: do not participate in activities for or against a candidate for elective office.

"That is an absolute prohibition," she said.

Nonprofits may, however, take positions on issues, such as the war in Iraq and immigration reform, she said.

One rabbi asked whether an organization might criticize the administration at election time. "The answer is, you're safest in talking about the issues without saying the administration's stand," she said.

Restrictions on the participation of religious groups in electoral activities are nothing new, legal experts say, but the scrutiny has intensified.

"This is a commissioner much more interested in enforcement," Aprill said of IRS head Mark Everson. His predecessor, Charles Rossetti, focused more on IRS services and interactions with customers, she said.

Also, the passage of the McCain-Feingold campaign finance bill, which limits individual contributions to political campaigns, means tax-exempt organizations are getting more cash, Aprill said. That has prompted IRS questions about whether charities use that money during political campaigns.

The IRS does not announce the subjects of its investigations, but Saperstein said if a synagogue or Jewish nonprofit had allegedly

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U.S.  
ELECTIONS  
2006

## ■ *The IRS has held several high-profile investigations of churches since 2004 elections*

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violated campaign restrictions, "in all likelihood, we would have heard."

Yet as the election draws near, Jewish Democratic officials increasingly have accused Republican candidates and some of their Jewish constituents of wrongdoing.

A focus of the dispute has been Sen. Rick Santorum (R-Pa.), who faces a tough re-election bid against Democratic challenger Bob Casey.

Ira Forman, executive director of the National Jewish Democratic Council, lashed out at Santorum after he hosted three nonprofits at a Jewish Leadership Summit in July.

"In a true sign of political deviousness, Santorum has roped the Orthodox Union and the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs into this recent political charade," he wrote in the Philadelphia Jewish Voice. "And in doing so, he and Republicans are playing games with the tax-deductible status of Jewish not-for-profit organizations."

Santorum's office said the meeting was one of many the senator has organized for constituent groups; similar to gatherings for blacks, women and Hispanics in non-election years that drew no criticism.

JTA attended the meeting, and there were no explicit endorsements of Santorum's re-election; speakers kept mostly to their assigned topics.

The timing is key, said David Goldenberg, deputy executive director of the NJDC. His group advises Jewish organi-

zations to just stay out of election year politics.

"Don't try to walk this gray line," he said. "It's just not a smart policy."

Participants at the event said no line was crossed. Nathan Diament, the O.U. director of public policy, noted that the event was not held at a synagogue, but in the Senate.

Santorum said the Orthodox Union routinely listens to both sides. It held a forum recently at a New Jersey synagogue for Sen. Robert Menendez (D-N.J.), who's running against Tom Kean, a Republican. A couple of months earlier, the union had held a similar event for Kean. "That's the way you have to do it," Diament said.

It's clear that at times a coincidence of interests — in Santorum's case, between a profoundly conservative politician and ardently traditional Jews — at least leads to a blurring.

Last week JTA obtained an e-mail that Barbara Ledeen, staff director of the Senate Republican leadership, had sent to Pennsylvania representatives of Chabad-Lubavitch, or shluchim. The e-mail, dated Oct. 23, included a letter written by Rabbi Shea Hecht of Brooklyn.

"At this moment, we need to show our support for Rick Santorum," Hecht wrote. "This goes beyond politics."

Hecht referred to donations to Casey from MoveOn.org, a grass-roots group that had briefly hosted anonymous anti-Semitic postings on its Web site. MoveOn's leaders removed the postings almost as

soon as they appeared, but the issue has resonated with conservative Jews.

"Please help yourselves and me by getting this message out," Hecht said.

A few hours after she sent the first e-mail, Ledeen recalled it.

"It is not an official communication from the Chabad of Pennsylvania and has not come from them," she wrote. "Our office has maintained and continues to maintain a correct and official relationship with the American Friends of Lubavitch. I apologize for any confusion."

Rabbi Levi Shemtov, the director of the Washington office of the American Friends of Lubavitch, also disapproved of the e-mail. "People do all types of things in their personal capacity," he said, "but that e-mail certainly did not emanate from

anywhere official within Lubavitch."

Another prominent Philadelphia Orthodox rabbi, Yaakov Kaminetsky, allowed the Santorum campaign to distribute his Kol Koreh — a routine halachic call on observant Jews to vote. The e-mail went out a week after Santorum and Kamenitsky met.

Democrats once again charged that Santorum was skirting close to the line.

Santorum's spokeswoman, Virginia Davis, said such friendships were natural.

"Sen. Santorum has worked for years with many Jewish groups both in his capacity as a senator from Pennsylvania and as chairman of the Senate Republican Conference," she said in an e-mail. "His outreach within the Jewish community is well documented and well known." ■

Leading up to elections, nonprofits are 'safest in talking about the issues without saying the administration's stand.'

**Ellen Aprill**

Law professor, Loyola University

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## U.S. city to vote on divestment

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The issue of divestment from Israel is resurfacing in a Boston suburb.

Voters in the 27th Middlesex District, representing half of the precincts of Somerville, Mass., will decide Nov. 7 on a nonbinding resolution instructing the district's state representative to support legislation calling for the state to divest from Israel Bonds or companies supplying

military equipment to Israel.

A second question instructs the representative to support legislation recognizing the right of all refugees, including Palestinians, to return to their land of origin.

This is the "last gasp of the divestment-from-Israel movement," says Alan Ronkin, deputy director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston. ■

# Russian moves stir concern in Israel

By LESLIE SUSSER

JERUSALEM (JTA) — A Russian plan to send a separate peacekeeping force to Lebanon has raised eyebrows in Israel, but officials say they have no objections to it.

But other steps by Russia — such as ties and arms supplies to radicals like Syria and Iran, and differences with Israel on key issues like Iran's nuclear weapons drive — are raising questions about Russia's role in the region.

Hawkish observers like Yigal Carmon, president of the Middle East Media and Research Institute, maintain that if it helps them return to prominence, the Russians would have no qualms about seeing Israel destroyed.

"They don't care about the Jews one way or the other. If it serves their interest to sacrifice us, that's what they will do," he says.

Regarding the Lebanon force, at least, Israel appears unconcerned.

Some observers see the force, operating independently of the United Nations' French-led UNIFIL peacekeepers, as a sign that Russia is seeking a foothold in the Levant that could prejudice Israeli interests. But the force will remain in Lebanon for only a short time, and will focus solely on reconstruction work. It consists of two teams — a contingent of engineering corps troops who are repairing bridges damaged in the Lebanon war and a small defense team to protect them.

Israeli officials say they would have preferred the Russians to operate within UNIFIL's framework, but knew of the force in advance and support the troops' humanitarian work.

"The Russian presence is a bilateral arrangement between Russia and Lebanon and Israel has no problem with it," Foreign Ministry spokesman Mark Regev told JTA.

Russia says it plans to withdraw forces from Lebanon within six weeks, by which time the bridge repair work should be complete.

They also are using their brief sojourn in Lebanon to make a point about relations with Muslims from Chechnya. JTA has learned that the soldiers guarding the engineers are from Chechen units in the Russian army.

Apparently the Russians believe rogue Lebanese militiamen are less likely to fire

on fellow Muslims. They also want to give the Chechens a sense of being part of the Russian role in the Middle East and to showcase their domestic Muslim connections in a positive way, analysts say.

More than hurting Israeli interests, the

Russians want to create the impression of being major players on the world stage, taking independent initiatives wherever they can, analysts maintain.

Nevertheless, Russia's ties to Syria and Iran and its position

on Iranian nukes are raising concern in Israel.

MEMRI's Carmon sees Russia as part of the anti-Israel, Iran-Syria-Hezbollah axis. Most Israeli analysts, however, see Russia playing a far more responsible role. For example, Amnon Sela, a Russia expert at the Herzliya Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies, maintains that "Russia under

Putin wants to show its independence on the world stage, but without compromising its close ties with the U.S., the E.U. and the G-8."

In the Middle East, that translates into Russia going along with international initiatives, while seeking to carve out niches where Russia can play a special role.

Analysts identify a number of influential groups in Moscow pulling Russian foreign policy in different directions. The most powerful are the predominantly pro-Western clique led by Putin. At the other end of the spectrum is the floundering military-industrial complex, motivated by profit and an abiding hatred of the United States, ready to sell arms wherever it can.

Israeli officials say there's no question that, for now, Putin's is the dominant voice, and he's fully in control.

"Putin is a great friend of Israel's and a great friend of the Jews," a senior official told JTA. "He may not be the only decision-maker in Russia, but thank God he's the most important one."

Still, Israeli-Russian relations have not been free of tension. One of the major sticking points was the large number of sophisticated Russian anti-tank weapons that

wound up in Hezbollah hands and caused most Israeli casualties in the Lebanon war — exactly as Israel warned when Russia overrode Israeli objections on arms sales to Syria.

During Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's mid-October visit to Moscow, Russian leaders gave assurances that the flow of Russian arms to Hezbollah was a thing of the past. They told Olmert that Syria and Iran had broken contractual agreements not to allow Russian arms they bought to fall into the hands of third parties, and they promised to be stricter in the future about enforcing their arms-export rules.

An even bigger Israeli concern is Russia's ongoing relationship with Iran. The

Russians are set to supply Tehran with \$700 million worth of Tor M1 mobile anti-aircraft systems, which could put Israeli jets at risk in another round of fighting in Lebanon or help Iran protect nuclear

installations in a showdown with Israel or the United States.

Then there's the Russian role in Iran's nuclear program. For years, Russia provided Iran with nuclear technology as they built the reactor at Bushehr. On the upside, Russia has not allowed Iran to use the facility to produce nuclear fuel, and construction at Bushehr is about four years behind schedule, because the Russians apparently are dragging their feet.

But Olmert failed to persuade Putin to consider military steps to pre-empt Iran's nuclear weapons' drive.

"The Iranians need to fear that something they don't want to happen to them will happen to them," the prime minister declared in Moscow, adding that Israel never would accept the idea of a nuclear Iran.

But while Russia and Israel both oppose a nuclear Iran, the stakes for each are very different. Russia would simply train dozens of its nuclear weapons on Iranian cities, creating a balance of fear.

For Israel, however, nuclear weapons in the hands of a radical regime that calls for its destruction constitute a clear and present existential threat.

## NEWS ANALYSIS

The soldiers guarding the Russian engineers in Lebanon are from Chechen units in the Russian army.

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## MIDDLE EAST

### Security Council 'regrets' armed Hezbollah

The U.N. Security Council commended Lebanon's army for deploying throughout the country, but expressed "regret" that Hezbollah remains armed.

Tuesday's statement was the first on the matter since Security Council Resolution 1701 ended this summer's Israel-Hezbollah war.

The presidential statement — the weakest of Security Council actions — referred to that resolution and Resolution 1559 in 2004 that called for militias such as Hezbollah to be disarmed and for an end to foreign influence in Lebanon.

The statement noted "important progress," particularly the deployment of Lebanese forces throughout the South, as Resolution 1701 mandates.

However, it "also notes with regret that some provisions of Resolution 1559 have yet to be implemented, namely the disbanding and disarming of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, the strict respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity, and political independence of Lebanon, and free and fair presidential elections conducted according to the Lebanese constitutional rules, without any foreign interference and influence."

### Lebanese arms smuggling continues

The United Nations reported continued arms smuggling from Syria into Lebanon.

Terje Roed-Larson, a senior U.N. envoy in the Middle East, said Monday that Lebanon regularly reports illicit arms shipments from Syria but doesn't crack down because of political instability in Beirut.

The smuggling has come under intense international scrutiny since Israel's war with Hezbollah, which ended with a U.N. Security Council resolution calling for the Lebanese militia to be disarmed.

Israel has violated the truce by continuing its air force patrols over Lebanon, but says this is necessary given the continued smuggling.

On Tuesday, eight Israeli jets staged a mock raid, flying low over a Hezbollah district in Beirut.

### Jerusalem pride parade alert

Israeli police will be on nationwide high alert for next week's international gay pride parade in Jerusalem.

Police said Tuesday that they'll deploy in force during the "World Pride 2006" event Nov. 10 to prevent violent protests by religious groups.

Possible scenarios include attacking marchers and blocking roads. An additional 2,000 border police are to be called from counterterrorist duties in the West Bank to keep order at the parade.

At last year's event, a fervently Orthodox protester stabbed three participants.

### Study: Israelis hate the pious most

Fervently Orthodox Jews are the most hated group in Israel, a new study found.

The Geshet poll concluded that 37 percent of Israelis think fervently Orthodox Jews are the most disliked, 15 percent said the same of new immigrants from the former Soviet Union and 13 percent named settlers.

The survey, which interviewed 538 Israelis in the days before the upcoming 11th anniversary of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's assassination, also found that 47 percent believe the 2005 Gaza withdrawal was the most polarizing event in the history of the Jewish state, compared to 38 percent who named Rabin's murder.

### War doesn't stop Israel investing

Investment in Israeli high-tech companies held strong in the third quarter of 2006, despite Israel's war with Hezbollah.

Eighty-seven Israeli companies raised \$381 million last quarter, down from \$404 million in the second quarter of 2006, but still up from \$336 million in the same quarter last year, according to CNET News. Israeli companies also raised \$1.15 billion in venture capital through three quarters this year, as opposed to \$1.07 billion in 2005.

## NORTH AMERICA

### NCJW praises FDA on HPV vaccine

The National Council of Jewish Women praised the Food and Drug Administration for recommending a vaccine that could prevent cervical cancer.

"Because the vaccine has proven effective only when introduced before an individual contracts a strain of the sexually transmitted HPV virus, it is vital that girls have access to and receive the vaccination before they become sexually active," NCJW said Tuesday.

Some conservative groups had opposed the guidelines, saying they encourage promiscuity.

"We are appalled that these groups would risk the lives of millions of women and girls by promoting such misinformation," NCJW said.

### Reform center: Clarify 'moral values'

A leading Reform rabbi wants media outlets who identified so-called "values voters" in 2004 exit polls to correct what he called a mistake.

Rabbi David Saperstein, who heads the Reform movement's Religious Action Center, joined with Rev. Jim Wallis, an evangelical pastor who has criticized the politicization of his movement, in a letter sent Tuesday to NBC, CBS, ABC, CNN, Fox News and The Associated Press.

They asked the broadcasters to avoid what they said was a mistake in the 2004 election: identifying the 22 percent of voters who ranked "moral values" as their lead reason for voting as hewing to conservative values against abortion and gay marriage.

### Harris: I'm a Jewish wannabe

U.S. Rep. Katherine Harris, the Florida Republican running for the U.S. Senate, said she's a "wannabe" Jew. A Washington Post profile published Tuesday described Israel as one of Harris' "greatest passions" and quoted her as saying she is a Jewish "wannabe."

She toured Israel in 1992 and said she was proud when Israelis addressed her in Hebrew. Harris, who likened herself to Queen Esther in 2000 when she drew criticism as the Florida secretary of state who decided the state for George Bush, said she made her husband promise that one day they'd live in Israel.

## WORLD

### Press watchdog rejects CAMERA complaint

Britain's Press Complaints Commission rejected a complaint from a pro-Israel watchdog group against The Guardian.

The commission said two articles written in February by Chris McGreal raising parallels between Israel and apartheid-era South Africa were presented as McGreal's personal views, not as straight reporting. "Inherent in freedom of expression is the right for newspapers to publish challenging and partisan material, which inevitably includes political judgments with which many will disagree," the commission decided in the complaint brought by the Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America.